

PE2017/E: Extend the period that specialist perinatal mental health support is made available beyond one year

Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport submission, 6 June 2024

Thank you for your letter of 30 April on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee. Following your meeting held on 17 April to discuss the period that specialist perinatal mental health support is made available, you requested an update on the following issues:

- development of a draft service specification for perinatal mental health services
- progress on the Scottish Government's consideration of National Services Scotland's options appraisal report on Mother and Baby Unit provision
- review of the Mother and Baby Unit Family Fund
- publication of the Mental Health and Capacity Reform Programme

I am pleased to provide an update to your specific points below:

1. Development of a draft service specification for perinatal mental health services

The Joint Strategic Board for Children and Family Mental Health has identified the development of a service specification for clinical perinatal services as a priority area within the workstreams. Work is underway to bring stakeholders together, including Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Network Scotland, to agree a first draft.

2. Progress on the Scottish Government's consideration of National Services Scotland's options appraisal report on Mother and Baby Unit provision

I wrote to the [Health, Social Care and Sport Committee](#) on 29 April to inform them that I am considering the Mother and Baby Unit Options Appraisal from NHS National Services Scotland, which will be published in due course. The outcome will be impacted by current financial restrictions, which prevent new capital spend by Boards.

I also recognise the distinctive challenges that mental health services in the North of Scotland face in delivering care to the most severely ill women in the perinatal period. For this reason, I told the Committee of my intention to provide £85,000 in this financial year to support the first phase of work to develop Intensive Treatment Services for perinatal women, their infants and families in the North of Scotland. We will be engaging with Boards, local perinatal mental health services and those with lived experience to assess how this additional funding will be best used.

3. Review of the Mother and Baby Unit Family Fund

Where travel to a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) is necessary, we are continuing to operate the Mother and Baby Unit Family Fund (MBUFF) which helps families with expenses incurred when visiting a loved one admitted to a MBU.

We are currently reviewing the terms and conditions of the MBUFF, taking into account feedback from those with lived experience and clinical staff, to ensure its effectiveness. We are considering recommendations such as: removing the £500 cap; exploring the limit of travel expenses; and extending the claim to cover the patient as well as the family where appropriate. We will be meeting with both NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and NHS Lothian, as host Boards, to gather further feedback. The review is expected to be completed by autumn 2024.

4. Publication of the Mental Health and Capacity Reform Programme

We had intended to publish the initial delivery plan for the Mental Health and Capacity Reform Programme on 2 May. Given other pressing parliamentary business that week, the statement and publication did not go ahead. We will reschedule the publication date as soon as practical.

You also asked whether the Scottish Government holds any relevant information or guidance on the designing and building of hospitals.

NHSScotland (NHSS) Assure - Health Facilities Scotland (HFS) publish a library of NHSS Guidance on behalf of Scottish Government for the design, construction and operation of NHSS Facilities. A master list of all current guidance can be found at: [HFS Guidance Index](#). Although not Mother and Baby Unit specific, [Health Building Note 03-01](#) on Adult Acute Mental Health Units may be of particular interest.

I remain committed to ensuring equitable, coordinated access to mental health provision for women, infants and their families throughout pregnancy and during the postnatal period; and appreciate the Committee's interest.

MAREE TODD